Take over of Larsen and Toubro Ltd.

1699. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to allow take over of Larsen and Toubro Ltd. by other Indian competitors through the support of various financial institutions;

(b) whether Government are aware that the take over of L&T Ltd. by other competitor may cause monopoly of one company in cement industry and cement prices may rise; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to stop such practices to avoid monopolisation of cement industry in the national interest?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) have informed that M/s Grasim Industries Ltd. have acquired 2.5 crore fully paid up equity shares of Larsen and Toubro Ltd. They have, with their wholly owned subsidiary, made a public announcement on 14.10.2002 to acquire 20% of L & T in terms of the provisions of the Takeover Regulations. Financial Institutions have played no role in this acquisition. Government have followed a policy of free entry into cement industry to prevent perpetuation of any monopoly.

Appointment of coin distribution agencies

1700. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Reserve Bank of India pays a commission of about 10 per cent on private agencies distributing coins in exchange for currency notes of equal value;

(b) if so, on what basis and through what means such agents or agencies are appointed or allocated; and

(c) the number of such coin distributing agencies in the country and the amount of commission paid to agents during 2001-02 and during the current year so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) With a view to ensuring distribution of coins in a wider areas and to reach to a large segment of population, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has implemented a scheme on temporary basis for distribution of coins through Post Offices, Co-operative Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Transport Undertakings and NGOs. The coins are collected by these institutions from RBI Offices against payment of face value. An amount of Rs. 250/- per coin bag (irrespective of denomination and value) is paid by RBI to these institutions to defray their expenses for collection, transportation and distribution of coins at face value to the public.

(b) The institutions are permitted to undertake the work on application subject to usual safeguards.

(c) Number of institutions which offered their services are as under:-

Co-operative Banks	9
RRBs	6
Post Offices	4
State Transport Undertakings	3
NGOs	5

The scheme was introduced in August, 2002 and so far an aggregate amount of Rs. 93.94 lakhs has been paid to the institutions.

International Credit Cards

1701. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted residents/ individuals to obtain International Credit Cards issued by overseas banks and other agencies;

(b) whether Indian nationals are required to maintain foreign currency account in India to have such credit cards; and

(c) if so, what are the details of the scheme announced by the RBI and who are the beneficiaries of the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.